

'Do not even attempt to fall in love
or stay in love without this book.'
Cosmopolitan

HOT

LOVE

HOW TO GET IT

TRACEY COX

**What they said about
HOT RELATIONSHIPS**

‘The only relationships guide you’ll ever need.’
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‘Tracey Cox has the answer to just about anything involving relationships ... a good read.’
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Also by Tracey Cox

HOT SEX
HOT RELATIONSHIPS
A BIT ON THE SIDE

HOT LOVE

HOW TO GET IT

TRACEY COX



BANTAM BOOKS

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Contents

[Cover](#)
[Praise for Hot Relationships](#)
[Also by Tracey Cox](#)
[Title Page](#)
[Copyright](#)
[Imprint Page](#)

Introduction

1 WOULD LIKE TO MEET ...

[Ten great things about being single](#)
[The meet market: where to find Mr or Ms Perfect-for-you](#)
[How to flirt their knickers off \(well, almost\)](#)
[Fancy a fling?](#)

2 OKAY, I THINK I'VE FOUND THEM

[The six stages of a relationship](#)
[I thought I'd found them but ...: two common relationship hiccups](#)
[Saying 'I love you'](#)

3 GETTING SERIOUS

[The secrets of success](#)
[Four relationship no-nos](#)
[Let's live together](#)
[Will they ever ask/accept?](#)

4 SEX: THE GLUE THAT STICKS YOU TOGETHER

[Five steps to a great sex life](#)
[What to do when your libidos don't match](#)
[Help! My partner's awful in bed](#)
[Honey, wake up! I just had an orgasm](#)

5 SEX TROUBLESHOOTING: THE EIGHT MOST-ASKED COUPLE QUESTIONS

6 AND IF IT ALL GOES HORRIBLY WRONG ...

[The get-over-it guide](#)

[By the same author](#)

Introduction

I told my best friend I was writing a book about relationships and she spat wine halfway across the bar. ‘You can’t!’ she said. ‘You’re, you know, *divorced!*’

‘Oh my *God!*’ I said. ‘I’d completely forgotten.’

Not. Look, I admit it. It doesn’t make me feel terribly confident either when I’m described as ‘Sex and Relationships Expert. Divorced’. It does sound like a contradiction in terms, so I thought I’d better explain myself up front.

What qualifies me as a relationships ‘expert’? Well, I’ve got a psychology degree. I’ve also spent more than a decade writing, researching and talking about sex and relationships. I was *Cosmopolitan* agony aunt, presented a talk-back radio show and lots of telly programs on relationships as well as website stuff and body language research – oh, and I’ve had, er, lots of practice. I’ve been married and divorced. I’ve had six-week flings, several two-year this-must-be-the-one live-in relationships, first-date fizzles, four-year triumphs (and yes, the odd overnighter as well). But if you want reassurance that I met, married and am currently snuggled up on the couch with Mr Bloody Perfect, you’re reading the wrong book. I just happen to know a bit more than the average person about relationships on both an academic and personal basis. (And I have to say, out of the two, I’ve probably learnt more from experience and talking to real people than I have from those psychological studies, however fascinating they are.)

This book is for singles and couples, men and women, heterosexuals, bisexuals, gays and lesbians. While it’s predominantly addressed to straight couples (simply because constantly writing girl, boy or boy, boy or girl, girl all the time would have been confusing), all the advice applies to every couple combination.

Unfortunately, reading the book’s the easy bit. You could devour *Hot Love* cover to cover, be able to recite extracts off by heart, and still not benefit one iota. Knowledge will only get you so far: you’ve got to practise what I’ve preached. That’s what people mean when they say, ‘You have to work hard at relationships.’ You do. But it’s not really work, is it? It’s more about finding out about each other, exploring each other’s minds, hearts and bodies, treating each other nicely and loving each other to death. If that’s hard work, I’m volunteering for community service at whatever male model agency Calvin Klein use.

Hot Love will never be finished to my satisfaction because, every day, I discover something new about relationships. The temptation to keep on adding bits is enormous but I had to stop somewhere. So this is it: a selection of the good bits from *Hot Relationships*, packaged into a pocket size so you can have Hot Love wherever you fancy. Enjoy!



Would Like to Meet . . .

.....

While this book unashamedly celebrates love, you haven't got a hope of finding a fab partner until you relax about it. Fall in love with being single and all sorts of doors spring open. Of all the single people I know, it's the people who *like* being single, who *aren't* waiting around for their matching bookend, who get asked out the most. They're not gorgeous, just interesting, fun people to be around. So keep reading at your own risk. If my advice works, you might not just end up being happy solo, you might prefer it (at least for a little while). Besides, you've got no *choice* but to enjoy being single. Moon around, focus on all the bad things about it, put everything on hold until 'they' come along and I guarantee you'll be miserable *for life*. You won't be happy single and you won't be happy in a relationship either because – sorry! – you're never going to attract anyone worth knowing with an attitude like that.

TEN GREAT THINGS ABOUT BEING SINGLE

Instead of slipping into that woe-is-me stuff, why not rejoice in the freedom and excitement of your current state. After all, you already have a brilliant life-long partner and playmate permanently by your side. You!

Here are ten more very good reasons why you should jealously guard your singleton status rather than rush into the wrong relationship just for the sake of it.

M FOR HIM

1. You don't have to answer to anyone.
2. No one rolls their eyes when the remote accidentally sticks on the sports channel.
3. You can clip your toenails without someone vomiting in the background.
4. *Playboy* gets pride of place on the coffee table – and no one lectures you about how much porn degrades women.
5. You can dress up in your old football shirt and criticise the hell out of the players without someone saying, 'You're kidding yourself. With that beer gut you'd be flat out catching the ball, so don't give him a hard time!'
6. You don't have to tell her she doesn't look fat/her bottom's not big/more than a handful's a waste.
7. You can masturbate in the middle of the lounge room without fear of her walking in and saying, 'Ohmigod! This must mean you don't want to have sex with *me*.'

8. You can put tomato sauce on *everything* without ‘tut-tut’s and ‘Honestly, Harry, you’re such a pig with food!’
9. No one tells you you’re driving too fast.
10. You don’t have to be nice to her stuck-up, snotty friends.

F FOR HER

1. You don’t have to answer to *anyone*.
2. You can walk in the door after a *horrible* day’s work, throw your clothes in a pile, flop down in front of the telly in a disgusting, food-splattered dressing gown, and eat rubbish while watching rubbish – without anyone surfing the channels just when it’s at the good bit.
3. Fat days seem less important. So long as your stomach’s flat by Friday night, who cares if you’re bloated on Tuesday?
4. You can talk on the phone all night about absolutely nothing and lie outrageously about how wonderful Susan looked in her new outfit without someone saying afterwards, ‘But you told me she looked like mutton dressed up as lamb.’
5. You can change your mind every five minutes, just for the hell of it.
6. You can masturbate to fantasies of the gorgeous workman you passed on the way to the office, without feeling guilty.
7. Everything smells clean and fresh. There are no lingering boy smells (the obvious mixed with cheesy socks, all vainly disguised with bad aftershave).
8. You can make your own smells – without feeling ‘unladylike’.
9. You don’t have to explain why it’s essential to own 25 pairs of black shoes.
10. You can get drunk and sob over your hated-when-sober ex – without feeling totally silly the next day.

THE MEET MARKET: WHERE TO FIND MR OR MS PERFECT-FOR-YOU

You see them. You want them. You get them. It’s a simple equation that somehow doesn’t always add up in the real world. For a start, most of us tend to get stuck on the first bit – actually meeting someone we’d like to go out with.

Someone once said to me, ‘If you’re not meeting the right person, you’re mixing in the wrong social scene.’ There’s probably a grain of truth in that. After all, if you’re looking for a conservative academic with family values you probably won’t find them snorting coke down the back of a seedy nightclub. But you might well bump into them outside because, truly, you can meet someone anywhere at any time. Not just on the nights when you ‘go out’.

‘Where are all the single men?’ women wail.

‘Where are all the single women?’ men moan.

Now, unless all singles are agoraphobics and refuse to budge from their own living rooms, it’s obvious you’re crossing paths at least some of the time. Nightclubs and bars aren’t the only places singles hang out. Why not try ...

Parties

When you’re feeling fab and looking terrific, meeting people at parties is a cinch. Not so when you’re frumpy, frazzled or the competition is hot. But it’s worth making an effort because parties force

people to spend at least a few hours in one place out of sheer politeness. So you've got time to sit back and study your target, watch who they're talking to and for how long.

They're being chatted up by a girl with legs as long as a giraffe or a guy who's so bloody good-looking he must be gay? They could be brain-dead boring for all you know. (You, on the other hand, have personality and lashings of style.)

So find whoever organised the party and do some sleuthing. Single or attached? Nice person or steer-clear material? Find something you both have in common, then get them to introduce you.

'X, you must meet Sarah/Simon. They're as addicted to the movies as you are.'

The host/ess is snogging someone they've just met in the corner? Find an excuse to do something near your target – change the CD, grab some nibbles or enlist a friend's help and just go and stand over there. Next, simply catch their eye and smile a few times. If they seem friendly, close the gap and introduce yourself.

Once there, flirt like mad, completely monopolise them and don't even think about going to the bathroom if the competition is hovering like vultures. (If you must, offer to get them a drink so you can come back to claim them.)

Top tactics

- Smile. Happy people attract people to them.
- Start a conversation. How do they know the host or hostess? What do they do for a living?
- Give them a compliment. Your friends have just voted them best-looking guy/girl at the party.
- Drop lots of clues on how to find you again in case you get separated. Where you work, the suburb you live in, the fact that you know so-and-so.

No-nos

- Don't give up if you smile and they don't smile back. They might not have seen you (were too vain to wear their glasses) or they've simply drifted off in la-la land.
- Don't get drunk before meeting them.
- Don't muscle in when they're obviously already chatting up someone else or attached.

Nightclubs

In all the years I've been single, I estimate I've been to at least 50 or so different nightclubs around ten times each. Out of those 520 attendances, I've spoken to and flirted with hundreds of men. But you know what? I've only ever had a relationship with one that lasted past two dates.

'You must be kidding!' said my girlfriends, when I revealed this astonishing fact. *Silence*. 'But dead right – I've never ended up having a relationship with someone I've met in a club either.'



Ever noticed how the talent looks better at closing time? It's not just the alcohol, say psychologists. We unconsciously inflate our opinions of others late at night to make ourselves feel better about the dwindling options. At 10 pm, singles judged the average attractiveness of opposite-sex club patrons as 2.3 on a scale of 1 to 5. Ratings soared to 3.8 an hour before the club shut. Unfortunately, the effect evaporates in the harsh light of the morning after.

The stats back me up on this one: less than 4 per cent of people who meet in a nightclub, on holiday, or through the personals end up marrying. Subtract the other two and it evens out to one out of a hundred.

‘This is the first time I’ve been single for any period of time. At first, it took a bit of getting used to and I was desperate to meet someone but I’m just starting to enjoy it. I met a really nice guy the other night and it was like, “Oh no! I hope I don’t like you because I don’t want to give up all this freedom just yet.”’

Lynda, 34, journalist

But there are nightclubs and nightclubs. I’m talking the dimly lit, loud music blaring, dance floor, can’t-talk-unless-you-shout type. Clubs with cosy little bars off to one side and fabulous outdoor drinking areas are something else entirely.

For a start, you can actually see each other – and you can talk without all the veins in your neck popping out (most unattractive).

So unless it’s casual sex you’re after, avoid the dark spots. Like your mother said, stick to the well-lit areas if you want to play it safe.

Top tactics

The dark bit: Anyone you meet after 12 drinks will seem wonderful. Don’t give your home phone number to anyone you meet after three stiff spirits; work number only after you’ve downed up to five (Get theirs if you’re still able to talk after this and be sure to write a description to jog your memory the next day: ‘girl who waz druk with fizzy hare’ or ‘blok wat tried to kizz me’.) Whoever you meet, assume they’re half as attractive as they appear under dim light. Don’t expect anyone to call when they say they will and it’ll seem a nice surprise if they do.

The lit bit: Be 50 per cent more suspicious than you would normally (the vibes from the dark bit leak out under the doors). Use the flirting techniques described later in this chapter, especially the ones that make you stand out from the crowd. Don’t wear black. Nightclub gear is more uniform than McDonald’s.

Pubs and bars (minus the dance floor)

Now we’re talking – especially if it’s a pub. The combination of a packed crowd, plenty of chance to take the long way round and accidentally rub your way through the best-looking group in the place, a few ales to take the edge off, not too noisy so you can talk but noisy enough where silences don’t seem uncomfortable – the only thing that could possibly make it better is a pool table.

Personally, I would rather eat 12 hot chillies than pick up a pool cue, but I have to admire people who work the table: the old ‘lean forward to show off the cleavage’ if you’re a girl; the ‘push the cue really hard with your shirt sleeves pushed up so your biceps flex’ if you’re a bloke. We know what you’re playing at guys (and it isn’t pool) but the floor show works anyway!

Top tactics

Use the same formula as you do for parties. Move closer to whoever you’ve got your eye on. Smile a

lot, make eye contact, make sure you're standing at the bar when they are. 'A bit crowded, isn't it!' or 'Phew! Hot in here!' is all you need to get the conversation rolling.

No-nos

It's very easy to get carried away when you're drinking in 'shouts'. If you find you're singing 'Can't Get No Satisfaction' at the top of your lungs, you've had too many (and need to update your CD collection). Tip for male pool players: a bulging erection pushed into our back as you're 'helping' us is taking things too far, too soon. Doing that aggressive macho sulk thing when you lose isn't attractive either.

The friend-of-a-friend

This is how most people meet the love of their life – they're introduced through a third party (most often your family or a friend). A cinch when it's someone you know well – not so easy when you've seen them over at your neighbour's or at a distance at a sort-of-friend's party but never got to meet. You're too shy to ask them to set you up but if you don't act soon, you fear they'll be snapped up by someone else. Take a deep breath! There's nothing desperate about calling your friend or neighbour and saying, 'X looked cute. Are they single? What are they like?' A gracious friend will immediately offer to set you up (assuming they're worth being set up with!). If they don't suggest it, you do – and remind them often until they're so sick of you hassling them, they finally do arrange that drinks party.

Don't play it coy once you finally do meet face to face. Sure, they might have figured out it isn't a chance meeting, but so what? If they're not flattered, they're not interested. Talk to them, pay them lots of attention and make it blatantly obvious you're interested, but leave the ball in their court to arrange another meeting. You've done the hard work – if they don't pick it up from there, the attraction's one way (yours).

 ***Mr Right is No 13 – or so say researchers. They claim once you've experienced 12 relationships, you'll know what you want and who's best suited to give it to you. With No 13, you'll finally get it right!***

Top tactics

- Flirt but don't be so easy to get you remove all challenge. Once you're convinced they've got the green light to ask you out, cool it a little. You're interested – but not desperate.
- Make sure the person who organised the meeting has your phone number (better still, give it to the person you really want to have it at the end with a simple 'Call me if you'd like to').
- Call to thank the person who set up the meeting, but go easy on the 'What did you think X thought of me?' questions. You'll put them in an awkward position if the answer's, 'Not much'.

No-nos

- Friendly doesn't mean frothing at the mouth. Resist giving thumbs-up signs to involved parties when they're not looking (they'll catch you for sure). Pretend you're talking to your best friend and keep it light.
- Don't ignore everyone else in the room. You don't need to superglue yourself to their side.

- Don't hassle the person who got you together if they don't call you afterwards. And don't run them down either. It's not their fault they didn't fancy you.
-

A class

Someone once told me to sign up for a course that usually only attracts men. Brilliant idea, I thought and trotted along in heels and an LBD (little black dress) to 'Basic Mechanical Skills Part I' at the local college. There, sitting around in their woollies and (where did they find them?) polyester slacks with permanent creases down the front were all the nerds that lived in my area. Because let's face it: any *real* man who doesn't know how to check the oil and water isn't going to completely humiliate himself by admitting it in front of a bunch of strangers.

I was unlucky but that doesn't mean you will be. Night courses, especially, are a great idea. Two friends have 100 per cent success ratings: one did a Thai cooking course, licking more than the spoon after school. Another signed up for an 'Internet for People Who Still Use Pencils' course and landed herself a cuddly, bald but totally adorable uni lecturer.

Top tactics

Everything from 'I didn't quite hear that last point, what did they say?' to 'Can you come over to help me with my homework?'

No-nos

Loudly chatting someone up so the rest of the class can't hear the lecturer. Some people actually enrol to learn.

The office

Not surprisingly, around two-thirds of people meet their partners through work, because this is the one situation you know exactly what you're letting yourself in for. Not only do you spend most of your time at work, you get to check out how people perform under pressure (that is, you see the *real* them rather than a dressed-up, well-behaved version). Plus, there's a million opportunities to chat them up.

Top tactics

How to find out if they're single? Meet them first. It's easy. Just say, 'Hi, I'm Jo/John and I work in —.' After a few smiles exchanged down the corridor ('How's your day going?' etc) it's time to move in for the kill. Corner them in the lift or the coffee room or whatever, sigh, and say, 'What a week! I'm really looking forward to the weekend. How's your week been?' They'll answer, then you can drop in the all-revealing question: 'What have you got planned for the weekend?' If their answer starts with 'we', forget them immediately. 'We' never means their mother, dog or best friend, it means a lover/partner/spouse. Even if they don't drop the royal 'we', you'll get a big clue from what they do have planned. A few parties or clubs? They're probably single or not dating seriously. Renovating the house? Almost certainly attached.

Got the green light? It's easy to follow it up with something like, 'I'm going to check out X (a bar or restaurant). Have you been there? Why don't you come along if you're not doing anything?'

If you don't want to be that forward and they work in your area of the office, ask them if they want coffee while you're passing their desk. Do they want to take ten minutes to go *out* for a coffee?

they seem snowed under, offer to pick them up a sandwich while you're out. Next time, ask them if they want to have lunch at that great new lunch place.

No-nos

- Anyone who's married or in a serious relationship or your boss.
- Following them around, sending lovey-dovey e-mails, staring at them like a love-sick puppy dog.
- Flirting heavily (that is, snogging beside the photocopier). Save it for outside work hours.
- Discussing the ins and outs (particularly the ins and outs) of your relationship with colleagues

Your flat

You just can't believe it. For six months, you've shared the dishes, toothpaste and coffee. People keep assuming you're a couple because you do the shopping together, but it's a strictly flatmate/friend thing – at least it was until now. Now you can't imagine why you didn't realise how stunning they were. Now you lie in your bed wishing you were in theirs across the hall. A gift from heaven – or the beginning of a nightmare?

Personally, I'd think twice before sharing a bed with a flatmate. For a start, you become instant *de factos* – the relationship's serious before it's even started. If you split up, one usually ends up moving out (leaving one of you with the problem of finding a replacement); if they don't move out, bringing home a new partner is never going to feel comfortable again. Having said all that, more than one married couple has met when one answered a 'room for let' ad.

Top tactics

Don't act on impulse. Wait until you're absolutely certain you want to take the relationship further, then sit down and talk about it. Say how you feel and ask if they feel the same. If they don't, drop it (you can't, move out).

If you do decide to start dating, create your own 'space' for each other. Don't automatically sleep together every night. Keep going out separately with friends, in fact, go out more. In other words, don't live in each other's pockets even though you actually are.

'When you're single, you drive yourself more. You force yourself to go out when you'd really rather chill in front of the television. There's always this fear that if you don't make the effort, you'll have missed the one opportunity you had of meeting Mr Wonderful.'

Charlotte, 25, student

No-nos

- Don't do it because you've just had an awful night where no one chatted you up and you want reassurance that you're attractive.
- Don't do it because you're both drunk, you've just been dumped or your vibrator just died.

Introduction agencies

Oh no, has it really come to this? Hold on one second. You might be surprised who's using introduction agencies these days. Busy people. Career people. *Intelligent* people who realise they're unlikely to meet someone at a bar or a nightclub or don't have the time or energy. Isn't it logical to have a computer (because that's how it's done) match you up with someone with similar interests and aspirations? Sure, they can't predict chemistry but you never know your luck in a big introduction agency. Your 'how we met' story possibly won't thrill the grandkids but, truly, is it more dignified to say you met in a bar? Introduction agencies do the legwork so they're especially useful for people who are in their late thirties or forties when your options or avenues may have decreased. They can't promise miracles but a good, professional dating agency is well worth a try.

Top tactics

- Talk on the phone for at least an hour or so to make sure you're compatible. Don't be afraid to ask lots of questions: you both know you're after a long-term relationship so there's no need to pretend you aren't.
- Arrange to meet for coffee rather than lunch or dinner so you don't waste time if it doesn't work. Be polite always but don't lead people on. If you don't like them say, 'You're a great person, X, but unfortunately, not quite what I was looking for.'

 ***Think twice before hitting the clubs in that mini and plunge top: it's nature's way of trying to get you pregnant. One bar and club survey showed single women's hemlines got shorter and necklines dropped during ovulation, the most fertile time of the month.***

No-nos

- Don't invite strangers to your home and don't go to theirs until you know them very well.
- If it's just sex you're after, spell it out. If you think that's all they're after, ask them.
- Trust your gut instinct and listen carefully to their relationship history. Are they using the service for the right reasons or because they really are such a no-hoper this is a last resort?

Dinner for Six

Dinner for Six and other 'meet new people' organisations like it deserve special mention. They don't bill themselves as introduction agencies but provide a way of 'supplementing people's social lives', other words, a way to meet new people.

They work because it's a big enough group not to feel obliged to be nice to one person in particular and small enough to get to know everyone reasonably well. A friend of mine went a couple of times, and while he didn't meet the woman of his dreams, he made some great friends (who, I might add, were responsible for introducing him to his current two-year love).

The more single people you meet, the more you up your chances of finding someone who's available that suits you.

Top tactics

By all means shine but don't dominate the conversation. If you see the person you're keen on being chatted up by someone else, don't panic, just move to sit next to them at the first available

- [read Blood Prophecy \(Drake Chronicles, Book 6\)](#)
- [Golden Lads: Sir Francis Bacon, Anthony Bacon, and Their Friends here](#)
- [click Let it Blurt: The Life and Times of Lester Bangs, America's Greatest Rock Critic](#)
- **[read Notes from Underground](#)**

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